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## Critical Notes.

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### A PSALMIST'S EPITHALAMION.

The 45th psalm is a nuptial ode and has been the object of reverent contemplation from earliest times. The Christian mystic finds in it brilliant messianic anticipations and grounds his faith in a use made of quotations from it by the author of the Hebrews. The litterateur discovers "a poem of lofty and elegant diction." Every reader feels the charm of its gorgeous descriptions and the all-pervading enthusiasm which abounds in the poem. Whatever judgment may be made relative to the first portion of the psalm, it is most evident that at vs. 9 the marriage song begins. Professor Briggs regards the first part as portraying "the glories of the bridegroom." The psalm is by no means a single production. Indeed, the rhythm of the first portion is distinct and different from that of the second. The first part has the movement of a victorious pæan; the second is tuned to the measures of nuptial music. Some editor of the temple songs joined them together in order to celebrate the messianic king of Judah. "The psalm was expounded of the Messiah by the Targum and many Jewish scholars."

The second part, beginning with vs. 9, is at least a fragment of a marriage ode; and it is a right question to investigate what part of this ode is here retained. Who was the bride? Professor Cheyne sets forth the view of Hitzig, adding his own much more valuable suggestions.<sup>1</sup> He says: "Obviously the subject of the poem is the marriage of a great and warlike king . . . and if we explain 'daughter of Tyre' (vs. 13) as a vocative, it determines the queen to be a Tyrian princess. Let us first of all accept this view of vs. 13. Among all the kings of Israel and Judah the only one whom we know to have been married to a Phœnician princess is Ahab (1 Kings 16:31). This is pointed out by Hitzig. Like the hero of our psalm, Ahab was a lover of luxury and built himself an ivory palace." This we accept as the occasion which called forth this nuptial ode.

The poem beyond doubt is much confused in our text. Professor Cheyne says: "The nuptial dress is described in vs. 9; then out of its natural order, his entrance into his palace." In vs. 8 he not only finds this inversion of the natural order, but also in vss. 14-16. We may then, simply as a critical essay, restore a natural arrangement and then see what is lacking, if anything, in order to make a complete poem. There

<sup>1</sup> [This view was presented by Cheyne in *The Book of Psalms* (1888); in his more recent work, *The Origin of the Psalter* (1891), pp. 144-6, 166-71, he places the psalm in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus; but in *The Christian Use of the Psalms* (1899), p. 155, this latter view is abandoned.—EDITORS.]

is a description, more or less complete, of the bride's dress (vss. 8, 13); also a description of a company moving to a temple (vss. 14, 15) and an entrance into the temple (vs. 15); also the good will of the poet (vs. 10). If now we point the possessive pronouns of vss. 3, 8 as feminine, we shall have a description of the bride's personal attractions.

In seeking to restore, as perfectly as may be, this beautiful ode, the right of transpositions of sentences only is assumed. Several new readings are given in order to perfect the piece; but these are not changes of letters, simply a division of a word into two others, they having been run together in the editing of the temple-songs. Following these principles, the following poem may be constructed (references are to the English Bible):

## I.

- <sup>2</sup> Very fair art thou among Adam's children ;
- <sup>2</sup> Grace is molded in thy lips ;
- <sup>13</sup> Every glory is in thy perfections :
- <sup>17</sup> Therefore the people praise thee,
- <sup>11</sup> And the king desires thy beauty.

## II.

- <sup>13</sup> Thy vesture is golden,
- <sup>13</sup> Pearls amid its texture,
- <sup>8</sup> Myrrh and aloes (amid) its foldings ;
- <sup>8</sup> And thou makest all perfect thy garments.
- <sup>12</sup> The rich of the people await thee.

## III.

- <sup>9</sup> Daughters of kings in costly apparel,
- <sup>9</sup> Their waists with gold of Ophir,
- <sup>14</sup> These maidens are adorned for thee ;
- <sup>8</sup> They make thee glad with stringed music,
- <sup>9</sup> And standing at thy right hand is thy consort.

## IV.

- <sup>15</sup> Let them move on with joy and gladness
- <sup>8</sup> Out from the ivory palace :
- <sup>14</sup> Let her move on before the gay-clad throng,
- <sup>14</sup> Her companions behind her,
- <sup>14</sup> Unto the king.

## V.

- <sup>15</sup> Let them enter the temple of the king ;
- <sup>12</sup> And, daughter of Tyre,
- <sup>12</sup> With a thank-offering, thy face
- <sup>11</sup> Bow down to him ;
- <sup>11</sup> For he is thy Adonay.

## VI.

- <sup>10</sup> Hearken, daughter, and consider,  
<sup>10</sup> And incline thine ear,  
<sup>10</sup> Forget thy people and thy father's house :  
<sup>16</sup> Instead of thy father shall be thy children,  
<sup>16</sup> And thou shalt place them princes in the land.

In the first strophe the pronouns are regarded as feminine. In the third line a new division of the words is made, viz., vs. 14 :

לל-כבודה בחום לך

In the second strophe, second line, פנינים is accepted<sup>2</sup> as a corrected reading for פנימה. The third and fourth lines are read as follows :

מריואהלות קציע  
 ותכלי בגדתיך :

This division eliminates the word "cassia" of the English Bible, always a stumbling-block. The word קציע is translated "foldings." The root is rare ; Gesenius refers it to the incurvings in architectural works. The first three lines of the third strophe read as follows in the restored poem :

בנות מלכים ביקר  
 ותוך בכחם אופיר  
 בחולות מובאות לך :

The word תוך is rendered "waist." Beyond these changes few are made that are not recognized by critics.

The lyric form of this marriage ode is a five-line strophe with three tones in the line, except where the feeling of joy gives place to that of reverent instruction in the last two strophes. The poet's art is exquisite. He sees the lips of the bride as the molds for grace. His description of her mantling is scarcely to be equaled in literature. One thinks of the golden glory of the daisy, circled with its pearl-white rays. And his costly vested company of kings' daughters, her attendants, with their girdles of gold, reminds one of an eastern sunset, when bars of gold break through the colored splendors of the clouds. Apart from the interest which this marriage ode has as a most perfect type of Hebrew lyric poetry, the picture it gives of the life of Israel in the time of Ahab is of greatest value. Above King Ahab was the greater king whose throne was in His temple. Nor can anything be more delicate and beautiful than the poet's counsel to the bride to let Tyre's faith be supplanted by the faith of Israel, and to make this vow while she stood, surrounded by the splendors of her bridal retinue, within the precincts of the temple of God who was King in Israel.

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<sup>2</sup> So Krochmal, Graetz, Cheyne, Wellhausen, *et al.*